

# REMARKS TO MULTILATERAL COUNTERDRUG COOPERATION CONFERENCE

WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 18, 1997

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Thank you, Barry, for that very thoughtful and warm welcome.

General McCaffrey has served a long and distinguished career, as all of you know, in service to the American people, both in the military and now in civilian life. He is a diplomat, a scholar, an honest to goodness war hero who has given his unfailing support to the President and this Administration, and on top of that, he is as fine a human being as they come. So Barry, I'm delighted to be with you here today.

Many of you as participants in today's activities have been fighting the menace of illegal narcotics and drug use for so long that, in standing before you, I almost feel the same way as the gentlemen who fancied himself an expert on the great Johnstown flood. It seems that wherever this man went, he was fond of showing off his great knowledge of the flood to relatives, acquaintances, and even those whom he had never before met. When he died and went to Heaven, St. Peter told him of the tradition whereby newcomers would be permitted to address the assembly of saints. "That shall be easy," said the man, "I will speak about the great Johnstown flood." To which St. Peter replied, "That is fine, but just remember that Noah is in the audience."

And as I look around the room today and see a number of Noahs--Undersecretary Wirth, Congressional representatives, General Wilhelm, Stan Morris, Ambassador Mel Levitsky, and so many other government officials and those who care deeply about narcotics and also about Latin America and the Caribbean--I salute the admirable work you are performing in this forum even as I look forward to the opportunity to listen to you as well as speak, and learn from you as well as contribute to your discussions on a matter of critical importance to all of us as American citizens.

By almost any measure over the past few years, the hemisphere has been a true success story. Every nation but one is democratic, leaders are outward looking and confident, economies are growing and people's lives are generally improving. Nothing, however, will reverse this trend faster than a breakdown in the social fabric which binds societies together. And nothing, I believe, is more potent in this regard than the threat of illegal narcotics.

We come together this afternoon to address a matter of considerable urgency: the staggering toll of illegal narcotics trafficking, and the cooperative means we must begin to employ with the other nations of the hemisphere--North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean--to deal a knockout blow to drugs.

The illegal drug trade would simply not exist absent a demand for illegal drugs, and I firmly believe that our efforts against them must therefore begin at home. As a nation with only four percent of the world's population, the United States consumes a disproportionate amount of the world's illegal narcotics. We can do better, and we must.

- Each year, illegal drug use costs the United States almost \$70 billion in lost productivity, health care, and law enforcement, while exacting an incalculable cost in ruined and wasted lives.
- Every year, some 14,000 - 20,000 Americans die from the consequences of illicit drug use--between 40 and 50 of our fellow citizens *every day*.
- Thirty billion US taxpayer dollars annually--about the level of our current federal budget deficit--underwrite federal, state, and local government efforts to curb drug trafficking and abuse.
- Emergency rooms are stretched to the breaking point by half a million drug-related cases each year, while arrests top more than a million,

and courts and jails clog up like a bathroom sink without a plumber in sight.

No nation can long afford such devastating financial, social, and criminal consequences before its democratic institutions and its sense of community begin to suffer irreparable harm. That is true in the United States, and it is true abroad. But we have begun to see some encouraging signs. The number of Americans who are current drug users has dropped by 50 percent since 1979, from twenty-five million to thirteen million. And current cocaine users have dropped from six million to 1.7 million Americans in the past decade.

It's a powerful trend, but not one we can or should take for granted. That's why the President's National Drug Control Strategy, developed under the leadership of General McCaffrey, has established a comprehensive, balanced, and integrated blueprint to meet this challenge at every turn. Our strategy recognizes that domestic efforts alone--while critical--cannot address what is fundamentally a global problem fueled by increasingly powerful, international criminal cartels, none more insidious than those pushing their contemptable brand of thuggery right here in our own hemisphere.

To attack the drug trade successfully, we must begin to get at both the people who pursue it and their profits. No longer can we as a hemisphere afford--as we build a community of responsible nations in the Americas--to allow any nation to become a safe haven for criminals or their ill-gotten gains, as Attorney General Janet Reno and FBI Director Freeh so firmly stated during a meeting I hosted at the White House in August. That's why we are working so hard to establish a common front to ensure that criminals will face justice, wherever their crimes are committed, through extradition leading to sufficient jail time and asset forfeiture. We took a big step in that direction when we signed a protocol to our bilateral extradition treaty with Mexico when President Zedillo traveled to Washington just last week.

And it's also why we are bolstering law enforcement capability in the region by providing significant training and technical assistance to law enforcement officials, and why we are pressing for establishment of both a law enforcement training center and a judicial training center in the hemisphere. For criminals, there must be no place to hide from the law.

In our hemisphere, illegal narcotics trafficking knows no borders. It is an equal-opportunity problem, corrupting, coarsening, and ultimately destroying the fabric of society which all healthy democracies require to survive.

Latin American and Caribbean nations know this all too well--in fact, President Zedillo has called illegal narcotics the number one threat to Mexico's national security--greater even than civil disturbances in Chiapas or Guerrero. Caribbean leaders have said much the same. And as the nations to our south become wealthier, and drug cartels develop new markets to compensate for effective counter measures elsewhere, consumption, not just production, will also become an increasing threat to the fragile democracies of the Americas.

If we want to help these nations survive as open market democracies, which we have spent many years and billions of dollars trying to achieve, we must heighten our cooperation to address this dark threat which touches us all. We must support regional and sub-regional efforts to address drug production, trafficking, and consumption. We must share information with our partners. We must assist in institution-building so that judiciaries, legislatures, and law-enforcement agencies can counter international traffickers. And we must support international efforts to stop money laundering, which threatens the integrity of our financial institutions.

As President Clinton has noted time and time again, we cannot succeed alone, isolating ourselves from the opportunities or the challenges of the outside world. Politically, economically, we are more closely linked together with our neighbors in the Americas than perhaps we have ever been before. We are neighbors, but if we are to succeed, we must also be partners. Neighbors because of the hemisphere we share, partners because of the values we share.

In our joint effort against illegal narcotics, we need to get beyond finger pointing and recrimination. We need to roll up our sleeves and get down to the hard, day-to-day work of pulling together to improve our peoples lives, by working together to reduce demand, target traffickers, flush out money laundering, eradicate crops while providing development alternatives, share best practices, and put the bad guys in jail and take away their drug money until it hurts.

Much has changed in our hemisphere in the years since certification was passed--a blunt instrument as I called it during the OAS General Assembly in Lima last June. New realities have taken hold. Democratic leaders are in charge, and they actively want to work together with us to fight the joint enemy of the illegal narcotics trade. The hemisphere is increasingly showing us a new face, one of responsibility, commitment, and confidence. And as a result, we must begin to show the region a new face ourselves, based on mutual cooperation and mutual respect.

And that is precisely the message President Clinton took with him first to the 1994 Summit of the Americas in Miami, then to Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean where he traveled in May, and to South America--Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina--just last month. And it is precisely the reason we have now begun serious discussions with the other nations of the hemisphere to establish a regional alliance against illegal drugs, first proposed by the Administration in its September report to Congress on Enhanced Multilateral Drug Control Cooperation.

We seek to develop a new hemispheric alliance against drugs, in partnership with hemispheric democracies themselves. Our plan is that comprehensive national drug plans would provide the basis for hemispheric evaluation and monitoring of all countries based on impartial, technically-sound, internationally-accepted criteria and performance measures. It's a proposal we are working hard to include as an action item for April's Summit of the Americas in Santiago, Chile.

Is this a departure from our current approach? Sure it is, and many questions will have to be answered before we institute such a plan. But since the end of the Cold War our hemisphere has changed as radically as Europe with the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, and we now have partners in our hemisphere who are capable, courageous, and committed to the fight against drugs. And so our policy, too, must evolve. Simply put, when it comes to the fight against illegal narcotics and so many other issues, I believe the hemisphere is now ready to consider a new approach for a new and onrushing century.

And as a foundation for such an approach, we have already taken a number of concrete steps to put in place the outlines of an effective multilateral counternarcotics strategy, beginning with the 1988 Vienna Convention and continuing with recent milestones:

- The Narcotics Action Plan developed at the Miami Summit recognized the need for a broad, coordinated, hemispheric strategy to reduce drug use and production, including new enforcement methods to disrupt trafficking and money-laundering networks.
- The 1995 Summit of the Americas Ministerial Conference on Money Laundering in Buenos Aires developed a plan of action that included legal, regulatory, and enforcement actions, and called for ongoing assessments of progress.
- And earlier this year, through the OAS Drug Abuse Control Commission (OAS/CICAD), the nations of the community of the Americas developed forty action items for implementation of an anti-drug strategy which they endorsed last year in Uruguay.

But even as we take these steps in government, we must remember that we need the full cooperation of parents, educators, religious leaders, and local law enforcement to come together to oppose illegal drugs. We can't afford to let anyone sit out this fight. Rather, we must work together at home, in our schools, at work, and as communities in the Americas, so that together, we can strengthen and support a true community of the Americas.

And that's why we have put such a high priority on reducing the demand for illegal drugs by educating our youth to reject them. We will spend more than \$5 billion next year for drug prevention and treatment in schools and education, in prisons, and in innovative approaches to breaking the cycle of drug abuse and crime. We must change the attitudes of our children toward illegal drug use, and we are putting up \$195 million for a media campaign to do just that.

It's all part of our comprehensive approach. As we witnessed the signing of the Illicit Arms Trafficking Convention at the OAS with President Zedillo last week, President Clinton said, "The hemisphere is setting a new standard for the world in taking on global challenges...together, we are showing the way of the 21st century world...proving that democracies can deliver for their people...that together, we can tackle problems that none can defeat alone...and that, working as partners, our collective well-being can be greater than the sum of its parts."

But I believe we will only enjoy long-term success if we find new, effective ways to work together, beyond unilateral actions working toward a true hemispheric partnership against drugs. In the Americas, as former Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen likes to say, we don't just want businesses to win, we want the crooks to lose. And if we work together with purpose and resolve, if we stay the course, we will see, I am confident, an increasingly prosperous, and increasingly drug-free, community of the Americas.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be with you today.